SECOND SUNDAY
January 12, 1997

Recommendations for self-affirming process/self-acceptance

*Recognition that no one should be made to feel guilty about loving someone, regardless of sexual orientation

*Recognition that it is normal to talk about feelings/ attractions with peer counselors, friends, etc.

*Recognition that increased education is necessary (reading, movies, etc.)

*Surrounding yourself with supportive people (social events, groups, etc.)

*Dispelling myths

Ref. Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay and Transgender Students of McGill

More Similarities than Differences: Dispelling the Myths of Homosexuality

Myth #1: Lesbians and Gay men are always easy to identify

People often use lesbian and gay stereotypes to identify a person's sexual orientation, such as gay men are effeminate and lesbians are butch.

A study conducted to see if people could accurately identify a person's sexual orientation after watching a series of video taped interviews. **Close to 80% of the subjects were unable to identify the person's sexual orientation** (Berger et al, 1987).

Some studies have found that lesbians do rate higher on masculinity scores, which comes largely from their high self-rating as independent. The measures of masculinity and femininity tend to be gender-biased and are not very useful in the study of gay men and lesbians (Finley & Scheltema, 1991).

The homosexual community is very diverse and its members can not be neatly categorized into stereotypes based on myths and appearance. Only when we dispel these stereotypes, that continue to fuel people's homophobic attitudes, will people realize that there are more similarities than differences between the gay and straight population.

Myth #2: All Lesbians are either butch or femme.

Some gay women are, but many believe they do not have to adopt such restrictive roles in order to express their love of women. This does not mean we should pass judgement on those women who are in butch-femme relationships and who are happy with their roles.

The butch-femme myth stems from the visibility of the butch lesbian. The butch lesbian also reinforces the myth that lesbians can not get a man and the butch- femme relationship is acting out the man-woman relationship which is what all women really want.

Lesbianism is NOT a dislike of men. **Lesbianism is an inclination, a positive emotional, physical attraction to other women.**

Lesbianism (& homosexuality) is not just a sexual activity -- it is something that spans beyond a person's physical behaviour.

Myth #3: Women become lesbians because they have had bad or negative sexual experiences with men.

A 1990 study of lesbian and female students found that there was no significant difference in their traumatic heterosexual experiences. Both lesbians and heterosexual women reported the same number of traumatic experiences (incest, molestation, rape, physical abuse) (Brannock & Chapman, 1990). Most women said they began to question their sexual orientation because they felt strong emotional and/or sexual bonds with women and NOT because they felt an aversion towards men.

Myth #4: Openly gay teachers, professors, professionals and other role models are dangerous because they will try to recruit people to homosexuality.

Opponents of openly gay teachers and other role models argue that students may wish to be like their teachers and/or professors given their position of authority and prestige. An openly gay teacher or professor can, however, provide a positive role model for those students in the minority, who are gay or know they are going to be gay and who desperately need support and understanding.

Openly gay men or lesbians in positions of authority, such as in education, politics, religious institutions, the medical profession, etc. help to dispel the myth of homosexuals as socially maladjusted and unstable.

It is highly unlikely that one role model could override all the messages that reinforce heterosexuality in society.

Myth #5: Homosexuals want to lower the age of consent laws for sexual activity so that they can have access to young children and try and convert them.

NB: This has changed since the brochure was written. In many provinces the ages of consent are the same or close to the same.

In Canada, the age of consent for sexual activity for homosexuals is 21. For heterosexuals, it ranges from 14 to 18, depending on the province, sex and marital status of the individual.

Age of consent laws do not deal specifically with adult- child relations. These laws also prevent young people from having sex with each other.

There is no justification for the existence of separate age of consent laws according to one's sexual orientation. It is merely another example of homophobia and misconceptions about homosexuality.

Myth #6: Gay men tend to be pedophiles and molest children.

The perpetrators of child sexual abuse are overwhelmingly men; very few women are offenders. The abuser is usually a member of the child's family or someone known by the family.

Pedophiles, men who have a sexual preference for children, constitute less than 1% of the adult male population (Langevin, 1989). Pedophiles are quite distinct from adult gay men who prefer adult sexual partners. Studies have shown no correlation between a man's sexual orientation and a tendency to sexually abuse children (Langevin, 1989).

Homosexual pedophiles are considered a perversion of the normal homosexual man in the same way that heterosexual pedophiles are also a perversion.

Heterosexual men are twice as likely to sexually abuse children as homosexual men are. There is solid evidence that over 92% of child abuse cases, including same gender sexual abuse, are perpetrated by heterosexuals (Blumenfeld & Raymond, 1988).

The number of child abuse cases have increased by 500 to 1200% in the past five years (Rogers, 1988). It is crucial that we address the issue of child sexual abuse objectively and recognize that this abuse is occurring behind to many closed doors in so-called traditional family homes.

Myth #7: Gay men and Lesbians have limited social support networks.

In a homophobic society, it is certainly important for lesbians and gay men to build their own community to overcome social stigma and alienation.

Research has shown that both heterosexuals and homosexuals shared similar beliefs in the value of social support. Both report receiving similar amount of support but their sources differed.

Gay men and lesbians tended to depend more on friends and their partners and less on relatives and family than heterosexuals did.

Despite the obstacles to the creation of meaningful support networks, many lesbians and gay men are able to develop circles of significant and supportive people.

Many people repress their homosexuality and fear the stigma of 'coming out'. Some lead 'double lives' by having secret homosexual liaisons. Others maintain relationships with the opposite sex, hoping they will eventually 'fit' into the heterosexual community.

No one should be made to feel guilty about loving someone, regardless of sexual orientation. Society should address negative stereotypes and intolerance expressed towards homosexuality, rather than condemn people for expressing their love for another human being.

The Gay Pride movement emphasizes the importance of being honest with oneself and loving the person of one's choice in whatever way best fulfils and nurtures both partners.

There are more lesbians, gay men and bisexuals than people realize whether they are 'out' and visible... or closeted and 'passing' as heterosexual.

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More Similarities than Differences: Dispelling the myths of same sex relationships

Myth #1: Gay, Lesbians, and Bisexual people cannot and do not want long-term relationships

The stereotype is of the lonely gay man or woman drifting from one sexual liaison to another, never satisfied and never committed.

Studies have shown that between 40-60% of gay men are in steady relationships. These figures are probably higher because men in long term relationships tend to be older and less likely to go to bars, where these statistics were recorded.

Between 45-80% of lesbians are in steady relationships. In most studies, the proportion of lesbians in an on-going relationship was close to 75%.

It is hard to judge how long these partnerships last given the lack of marriage records. The few studies on older lesbians and gay men have shown that relationships lasting longer than 20 years are common.

Another study compared the rate of break-up between lesbian, gay, and co-habitating and married heterosexual couples over an 18 month period. For all couples who had been together for more than 10 years the rate of break-up was:

6% for lesbians,

4% for gay men,

4% for married couples.

For couples together for less than 2 years, only 1 in 5 relationships ended over the 18-month period. Overall the difference in break-up rates between homosexual and heterosexual couples is almost insignificant.

In general, a pattern of continuity and stability was seen in all the relationships.

Myth #2: One person always plays the role of husband and the other the wife in homosexual relationships

Invariably many people ask which partner is the man and which is the woman.

Research has shown that most lesbian and gay men actively reject traditional husband-wife or masculine-feminine roles as a model for homosexual relationships. Clear-cut or obvious husband-wife roles are uncommon.

Differences between the partners may be based on age, with the older partner acting as a mentor or role model.

Myth #3: Gay men cannot be monogamous

A study of gay male couples indicated that only 20% of relationships were sexually open. Many of the other couples followed a wide variety of patterns – as diverse as a similar survey of heterosexual couples indicated (Blasband & Peplau, 1985).

Myth #4: Gay relationships are abnormal and dysfunctional

A study of heterosexual university students found that the belief that gay relationships are inferior to those of heterosexuals is widely held. The students assumed that somehow the depth of feeling and commitment was not the same (Testa, Kinder, Ironson, 1987).

More Similarities than Differences: Dispelling the myths of same sex relationships

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Myth #2: One person always plays the role of husband and the other the wife in homosexual relationships

Myth #3: Gay men cannot be monogamous

Myth #4: Gay relationships are abnormal and dysfunctional

Studies have shown that, when homosexual and heterosexual couples are compared, they do not differ regarding levels of love and satisfaction.

There are no differences comparing the quality of the relationship and strength of the commitment between homosexual and heterosexual couples (Duff & Rusbult, 1986).

In summary, homosexual partnerships appear no more vulnerable (or more immune) to problems and dissatisfaction than their heterosexual counterparts.

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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DISCLOSURE

HOW DO I EMPOWER MYSELF TO COME OUT IN MY OWN WAY?

NEVER COME OUT IN ANGER.....NEVER COME OUT IN ANGER

Ask yourself the following questions?

*Is the relationship open?

*Are you honest with him/her/them?

*Is love for you based on who you really are or on beliefs of who you are?

*Is the cost of love maintenance worth it?

*How much energy have you expended to create a presence already?

*What will happen in a crisis when the truth comes out about your sexual orientation?

*Are you comfortable with your identity?

*Do you have a support system?

*Are you knowledgeable about homosexuality so you can answer questions and/or counter myths and misinformation?

*What is your current relationship with this person?

*Is this your decision?

*What are your motives?

Ref. Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay and Transgender Students of McGill

When a Friend Comes Out to You

We live in a society that often discriminates against people who are different. We have all been taught to believe that to be "straight" is to be normal. This can cause a great deal of pain for gay men, lesbians & bisexuals.

"Coming Out" or disclosing their orientation to others is an important step in gay people's self-acceptance. Like everyone, gay people accept themselves better, if they are accepted by others.

Someone who is coming out feels close enough to you and trusts you sufficiently to be honest & risk losing you as a friend. It is difficult to know what to say & do to be a supportive friend to someone who has 'come out' to you. Here are some suggestions that you may wish to follow...

- Thank him\her for having the courage to tell you. Choosing to tell you means that s/he has a great deal of respect & trust for you.
- Don't judge him\her. If you have strong religious or other beliefs about homosexuality, keep them to yourself for now. There will be plenty of time in the future for you to think & talk about your beliefs in light of his\her orientation.
- Respect his/her confidentiality. S\he probably is not ready to tell others right away and wants to tell them in his\her own way
- Tell her\him that you still care for him\her, no matter what. Be the friend you have always been. The main fear for people coming out is that they will be rejected by their friends & family.
- Don't be too serious. Sensitively worded humour may ease the tension that you both are probably feeling.
- A simple squeeze of the hand or a hug (with permission) can let him\her know you still care & that you don't think you can 'catch' anything
- Ask any questions that you may have but be prepared that s\he may not have all the answers. You can save some for later, or better yet, you could find some of the answers together.
- Include his\her partner in plans as much as you would with any other friend
- Be prepared to include him/her in more of your plans. S\he may have lost the support of other friends & family & your time & friendship will be even more precious to her/him. This may include "family" times like Christmas & Thanksgiving.
- Offer & be available to support him\her in telling others
- Call frequently for the first while after s/he has come out to you. This will let him/her know you are still his/her friend
- Be prepared for him/her to have mood swings. Coming out can be very traumatic. Anger & depression are common, especially if friends or family have trouble accepting his/her orientation. Don't take this personally. Be flattered that s/he is close enough to you to risk sharing his/her anger & frustration.
- Do what you have always done together. S/he probably feels that coming out will change everything in his/her life and this is frightening. If you always go to a movie together on Fridays, then continue that.
- Talk about other gay people you know. If s\he knows that you have accepted someone else, s/he will feel more confident that you will accept him/her.
- Learn about the gay community. This will allow you to better support him/her, and knowing about his/her world will help prevent the two of you from drifting apart.
- Don't allow her/him to become isolated. Let her/him know about organizations & places where s/he can go to meet people that you know of.
- If s/he seems afraid about people knowing there may be a good reason. People are sometimes attacked violently because they are perceived as gay. Sometimes people are discriminated against for things such as housing & employment, though in Ontario, this is illegal. If s/he is discriminated against illegally, you can help him/her in pursuing his/her rights
- It's never too late. If someone has come out to you before & you feel badly about how you handled it, you can always go back & try again
- Don't worry that s/he may have attractions or feelings for you that you may not share. Probably her/his feelings are feelings that you have for him/her. If s/he has more or different feelings than you have, these can be worked through. It's the same as if someone of the opposite sex had feelings for you that you don't share. Either way, it's probably not worth losing a friend over.

Coming out sources

From: Michael Barrett (mbarrett@huey.csun.edu)

Listed below are a few general book and journal sources which serve as starting points in the literature:

Gay or Lesbian

As We Are. Don Clark. Boston: Alyson. 1988 HQ76.3U5C58 1988

Coming Out : An Anthology of International Gay and Lesbian Writings. Stephen Likosky. ed. New York: Pantheon. 1992 HQ76.25C66 1992

Families We Choose : Lesbians, Gays, Kinship. Kath Weston. New York: Coloumbia. 1991. HQ76.3U5W48 1991

Gay and Lesbian Youth: Expressions of Identity. Keith C. Savin-Williams. New York: Hemisphere. 1990. HQ76.25S38 1990

Out in the World. Neil Miller. New York: Random House. 1992. HQ76.25M55 1992

Lesbian

The Original Coming Out Stories (expanded edition). Julia Penelope and Susan J. Wolfe. eds. Freedom: Crossing. 1989. HQ75.3C65 1989

Bisexual

Bi Any Other Name : Bisexual People Speak Out. Loraine Hutchins and Lani Kaahumanu. eds. Boston: Alyson. 1991 HQ74B5 1990

Transgender

Gender Outlaw : On Men, Women and the Rest of Us. Kate Bornstein. New York: Routlegde. 1994. HQ77.9B67 1992

Articles

"Homosexual Identity Formation : A Theoretical Model." V Cass. Journal of Homosexuality 4:219-35

"Developmental Stages in the Coming Out Process." E Coleman. Journal of Homosexuality 7:31-43

"Individual Differences in the Coming Out Process for Gay Men" G McDonald. Journal of Homosexuality 8:47-60

"Becoming Homosexual : A Model of Gay Identity Acquisition" R Troiden. Psychiatry 42:363-73

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Homosexuality: What Kinsey Really Said

by William H. DuBay (dubayw@delphi.com)

Forty years after sex researcher Alfred Kinsey told us that the world is not made up of two different kinds of people, gay and straight, we still read in the papers, "According to Kinsey, one out of ten (or one out of seven or five, depending on who is writing the piece) is homosexual." Such statements must have Kinsey spinning in his grave. Not only did he never make any such statements, he went out of his way to disclaim them.

The study that Kinsey and his colleagues published (Sexual Behavior in the Human Male in 1948 and Sexual Behavior in the Human Female in 1953) remains to date the largest and most significant study of human sexuality. Based on 16,000 in-depth personal interviews from the widest sampling of the general population, the Kinsey studies constitute most of what we know about homosexual behaviors. Kinsey was not the first or the last to observe that "homosexual" is a label society has invented to stigmatize and control the behavior. He repeatedly condemned the practice of labelling people homosexual:

"The classification of sexual behavior as masturbatory, heterosexual, or homosexual, is, therefore, unfortunate if it suggests that only different types of persons seek out or accept each kind of sexual activity. There is nothing known in the anatomy or physiology of sexual response and orgasm which distinguishes masturbatory, heterosexual, or homosexual reactions...(Kinsey et al. 1953:446) It would clarify our thinking if the terms could be dropped completely out of our vocabulary (Kinsey et al. 1948:617).

"Males do not represent two discrete populations, heterosexual and homosexual... Only the human mind invents categories and tries to force facts into pigeonholes. The living world is a continuum in each and every one of its aspects..(Kinsey et al. 1948:639).

"It is amazing to observe how many psychologists and psychiatrists have accepted this sort of propaganda, and have come to believe that homosexual males and females are discretely different from persons who respond to natural stimuli. Instead of using these terms as substantives which stand for persons, or even as adjectives to describe persons, they may better be used to describe the nature of the overt sexual relations, or of the stimuli to which an individual erotically responds (Kinsey et al. 1948:616-617).

"In regard to sexual behavior, it has been possible to maintain this dichotomy only by placing all persons who are exclusively heterosexual in a heterosexual category and all persons who have any amount of experience with their own sex, even including those with the slightest experience, in a homosexual category... The attempt to maintain a simple dichotomy on these matters exposes the traditional biases which are likely to enter whenever the heterosexual or homosexual classification of an individual is involved" (Kinsey et al. 1953:468-469)

While emphasizing the continuity of gradations between exclusively homosexual and exclusively heterosexual histories, Kinsey proposed his heterosexual-homosexual rating scale, based on both overt and psychological experiences (Kinsey et al. 1948:638-41):

0. Exclusively heterosexual with no homosexual
1. Predominantly heterosexual, only incidental homosexual
2. Predominantly heterosexual, but more than incidentally homosexual
3. Equally heterosexual and homosexual
4. Predominantly homosexual but more than incidentally heterosexual
5. Predominantly homosexual, but incidentally heterosexual
6. Exclusively homosexual.

Kinsey summarized his findings (Kinsey et al. 1948:650- 51) on the incidence of homosexual behavior among white males in the U.S. population in these words:

"37 per cent of the total male population has at least some overt homosexual experience to the point of orgasm between adolescence and old age. This accounts for nearly 2 males out of every 5 that one may meet.

"50 per cent of the males who remain single until age 35 have had overt homosexual experience to the point of orgasm, since the

onset of adolescence.

"58 per cent of the males who belong to the group that goes into high school but not beyond. 50 per cent of the grade school level. and 47 per cent of the college level have had homosexual experience to the point of orgasm if they remain single to the age of 35.

"63 per cent of all males never have overt homosexual experience to the point of orgasm after the onset of adolescence.

"50 per cent of all males (approximately) have neither overt nor psychic experience in the homosexual after the onset of adolescence.

"13 per cent of the males (approximately) react erotically to other males without having overt homosexual contacts after the onset of adolescence.

"30 per cent of all males have at least incidental homosexual experience or reactions (i.e., rate 1-6) over at least a three-year period between the ages of 16 and 55. This accounts for one male out of every three in the population who is past the early years of adolescence.

"25 per cent of the male population has more than incidental homosexual experience or reaction (i.e., rates 2-6) for at least three years between the ages of 16 and 55. In terms of averages. one male out of approximately every four has had or will have such distinct and conunued homosexual experience.

"18 per cent of the males have at least as much of the homosexual as the heterosexual in their histories (i.e. rate 3-6) for at least three years between the ages of 16 and 55. This is more than one in six of the white male population.

"13 per cent of the population has more of the homosexual than the heterosexual (i.e., rates 4-6) for at least three years between the ages of 16 and 55. This is one in eight of the white male population.

"10 per cent of the males are more or less exclusively homosexual (i.e., rate 5 or 6) for at least three years between the ages of 16 and 55. This is one male in ten in the white population.

"8 per cent of the males are exclusively homosexual (i.e. rate a 6) for at least three years between the ages of 16 and 55. This is one male in every 13.

"4 per cent of the white males are exclusively homosexual throughout their lives. after the onset of adolescence."

The findings on homosexual behaviors of females are slightly lower but equally impressive.

Kinsey drew our attention to the common practice of labelling "heterosexual" only those who are exclusively homosexual. but labelling "homosexual" anyone who has had even minimal homosexual experience. "The persons who are identified as 'homosexuals'in much of the legal and social practice," he wrote. "have rated anything between 1 and 6 on the above scale" (Kinsey et al. 1948:651).

Investigators of Kinsey's Institute for Sex Research confirmed this important observation (Bell et al. 1981:9). They found that the sexual behaviors of 1000 gay-identified persons in the San Francisco area ranged from 2 to 5 on the Kinsey scale. a range so broad as to include a full third of the population of this country. Whatever gay- identified persons have in common with one another. it is clearly not their sexual behavior but their adoption of the homosexual role.

Kinsey felt that the high incidence of homosexual activity among males of high school education was of particular importance:

"These are the males who most often condemn the homosexual. most often ridicule and express disgust for such activity, and most often punish other males for their homosexuality. And yet. this is the group which has the largest amount of homosexual activity... As a group these males may strenuously deny that their sexual contacts have anything to do with homosexuality: but the full and complete record indicates that many of them have stronger psychic reactions to other males o admit. When they no longer find themselves being paid for such contacts, many of them begin paying other males for the privilege of sexual relations" (Kinsey et al. 1948:384).

Kinsey himself was surprised at the high incidence of homosexual behaviors in our society and continually challenged his own

data. He finally concluded:

"Over a period of several years we were repeatedly assailed with doubts as to whether we were getting a fair cross section of the total population or whether a selection of cases was biasing the results. It has been our experience, however, that each new group into which we have gone has provided substantially the same data. Whether the histories were taken in one large city or another, whether they were taken in large cities or small towns, or in rural areas, whether they came from one college or from another, a church school or a state university or some private institution, whether they came from one part of the country or from another, the incidence data on the homosexual have been ore or less the same.

"While the validity of the data on all of the sexual outlets has been tested and retested throughout the study, especial attention has been given to testing the material on the homosexual" (Kinsey et al, 1948:625).

As to the origins of homosexual behaviors, Kinsey, like Freud, felt that all persons are born bisexual and one's sexual activities and pleasures depend on a wide variety of causes. Countless studies convinced him that any strong emotion can trigger sexual arousal. He wrote,

"The picture is that of the psychosexual emerging from a much more generalized and basic physiologic capacity which becomes sexual as the adult knows it, through experience and conditioning (Kinsey et al, 1953:165).

"Considering the physiology of sexual response and the mammalian backgrounds of human behavior, it is not so difficult to explain why a human animal does a particular thing sexually. It is more difficult to explain why each and every individual is not in every type of sexual activity...(Kinsey et al, 1953:451)

"I think that much of human sexual behavior is no more complicated than a person's likes or dislikes for particular foods, books, amusements, or anything else. Through it all, association is a very important factor. This means that what a person happens to do one time is avoided or repeated another time, depending upon the pleasure derived from the first experience (in Pomeroy, 1972:324).

"This problem, is after all, part of the broader problem of choices in general: the choice of the road that one takes, of the clothes that one wears, of the food that one eats, of the place in which one sleeps, and of the endless other things that one is constantly choosing. A choice of a partner in a sexual relation becomes more significant only because society demands that there be a particular choice in this matter, and does not so often dictate one's choice of food or of clothing" (Kinsey et al, 1948:661).

In a 1983 review of 228 major studies on sexual orientation published in 48 different journals, Psychologist John DeCecco and his colleagues at San Francisco State University found that the investigators were unable to define the term, much less come up with any evidence for its existence (Shively et al, 1983/84). This paper and others reinforced Kinsey's position that what makes an act homosexual is the object of the desire and not the subject. As Kinsey insisted, "If the term homosexual is restricted as it should be, the homosexuality or heterosexuality of any activity becomes apparent by determining the sexes of the two individuals in the relationship (Kinsey et al, 1948:615)."

In short, Kinsey gave us a picture of human sexuality quite different than the rigid categories of gay and straight propagated in the media. Instead, he gave us a picture of an astounding variety in human sexual experience, a variety, he insisted, that is quite unlike anything else in nature, a variety that physiological differences alone cannot explain.

Kinsey concluded his chapter on homosexuality in the "Male" volume with this paragraph:

"If all persons with any trace of homosexual history, or those who were predominantly homosexual, were eliminated from the population today, there is no reason for believing that the incidence of the homosexual in the next generation would be materially reduced. The homosexual has been a significant part of human sexual activity since the dawn of history, primarily because it is an expression of capacities that are basic in the human animal" (Kinsey et al, 1948:666).

William H. DuBay is a writer living in Costa Mesa, California. His books include Gay Identity: The Self Under Ban, McFarland, 1987.

Bibliography

Bell, A.P., Weinberg, M.S., and Hammersmith, S.K. **Sexual Preference: Its Development in Men and Women**. Bloomington.

SECOND SUNDAY
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Recommendations for self-affirming process/self-acceptance

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Myth #2: One person always plays the role of husband and the other the wife in homosexual relationships

Invariably many people ask which partner is the man and which is the woman.

Research has shown that most lesbian and gay men actively reject traditional husband-wife or masculine-feminine roles as a model for homosexual relationships. Clear-cut or obvious husband-wife roles are uncommon.

Differences between the partners may be based on age, with the older partner acting as a mentor or role model.

Myth #3: Gay men cannot be monogamous

A study of gay male couples indicated that only 20% of relationships were sexually open. Many of the other couples followed a wide variety of patterns – as diverse as a similar survey of heterosexual couples indicated (Blasband & Peplau, 1985).

Myth #4: Gay relationships are abnormal and dysfunctional

A study of heterosexual university students found that the belief that gay relationships are inferior to those of heterosexuals is widely held. The students assumed that somehow the depth of feeling and commitment was not the same (Testa, Kinder, Ironson, 1987).

Studies have shown that, when homosexual and heterosexual couples are compared, they do not differ regarding levels of love and satisfaction.

There are no differences comparing the quality of the relationship and strength of the commitment between homosexual and heterosexual couples (Duff & Rusbult, 1986).

In summary, homosexual partnerships appear no more vulnerable (or more immune) to problems and dissatisfaction than their heterosexual counterparts.

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SECOND SUNDAY
January 12, 1997

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DISCLOSURE

HOW DO I EMPOWER MYSELF TO COME OUT IN MY OWN WAY?

NEVER COME OUT IN ANGER.....NEVER COME OUT IN ANGER

Ask yourself the following questions?

*Is the relationship open?

*Are you honest with him/her/them?

*Is love for you based on who you really are or on beliefs of who you are?

*Is the cost of love maintenance worth it?

*How much energy have you expended to create a presence already?

*What will happen in a crisis when the truth comes out about your sexual orientation?

*Are you comfortable with your identity?

*Do you have a support system?

*Are you knowledgeable about homosexuality so you can answer questions and/or counter myths and misinformation?

*What is your current relationship with this person?

*Is this your decision?

*What are your motives?

Ref. Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay and Transgender Students of McGill

When a Friend Comes Out to You

We live in a society that often discriminates against people who are different. We have all been taught to believe that to be "straight" is to be normal. This can cause a great deal of pain for gay men, lesbians & bisexuals.

"Coming Out" or disclosing their orientation to others is an important step in gay people's self-acceptance. Like everyone, gay people accept themselves better, if they are accepted by others.

Someone who is coming out feels close enough to you and trusts you sufficiently to be honest & risk losing you as a friend. It is difficult to know what to say & do to be a supportive friend to someone who has 'come out' to you. Here are some suggestions that you may wish to follow...

- Thank him\her for having the courage to tell you. Choosing to tell you means that s/he has a great deal of respect & trust for you.
- Don't judge him\her. If you have strong religious or other beliefs about homosexuality, keep them to yourself for now. There will be plenty of time in the future for you to think & talk about your beliefs in light of his\her orientation.
- Respect his/her confidentiality. S\he probably is not ready to tell others right away and wants to tell them in his\her own way
- Tell her\him that you still care for him\her, no matter what. Be the friend you have always been. The main fear for people coming out is that they will be rejected by their friends & family.
- Don't be too serious. Sensitively worded humour may ease the tension that you both are probably feeling.
- A simple squeeze of the hand or a hug (with permission) can let him\her know you still care & that you don't think you can 'catch' anything
- Ask any questions that you may have but be prepared that s\he may not have all the answers. You can save some for later, or better yet, you could find some of the answers together.
- Include his\her partner in plans as much as you would with any other friend
- Be prepared to include him/her in more of your plans. S\he may have lost the support of other friends & family & your time & friendship will be even more precious to her/him. This may include "family" times like Christmas & Thanksgiving.
- Offer & be available to support him\her in telling others
- Call frequently for the first while after s/he has come out to you. This will let him/her know you are still his/her friend
- Be prepared for him/her to have mood swings. Coming out can be very traumatic. Anger & depression are common, especially if friends or family have trouble accepting his/her orientation. Don't take this personally. Be flattered that s/he is close enough to you to risk sharing his/her anger & frustration.
- Do what you have always done together. S/he probably feels that coming out will change everything in his/her life and this is frightening. If you always go to a movie together on Fridays, then continue that.
- Talk about other gay people you know. If s\he knows that you have accepted someone else, s/he will feel more confident that you will accept him/her.
- Learn about the gay community. This will allow you to better support him/her, and knowing about his/her world will help prevent the two of you from drifting apart.
- Don't allow her/him to become isolated. Let her/him know about organizations & places where s/he can go to meet people that you know of.
- If s/he seems afraid about people knowing there may be a good reason. People are sometimes attacked violently because they are perceived as gay. Sometimes people are discriminated against for things such as housing & employment, though in Ontario, this is illegal. If s/he is discriminated against illegally, you can help him/her in pursuing his/her rights
- It's never too late. If someone has come out to you before & you feel badly about how you handled it, you can always go back & try again
- Don't worry that s/he may have attractions or feelings for you that you may not share. Probably her/his feelings are feelings that you have for him/her. If s/he has more or different feelings than you have, these can be worked through. It's the same as if someone of the opposite sex had feelings for you that you don't share. Either way, it's probably not worth losing a friend over.

Coming out sources

From: Michael Barrett (mbarrett@huey.csun.edu)

Listed below are a few general book and journal sources which serve as starting points in the literature:

Gay or Lesbian

As We Are. Don Clark. Boston: Alyson. 1988 HQ76.3U5C58 1988

Coming Out : An Anthology of International Gay and Lesbian Writings. Stephen Likosky, ed. New York: Pantheon. 1992 HQ76.25C66 1992

Families We Choose : Lesbians, Gays, Kinship. Kath Weston. New York: Coloumbia. 1991. HQ76.3U5W48 1991

Gay and Lesbian Youth: Expressions of Identity. Keith C. Savin-Williams. New York: Hemisphere. 1990. HQ76.25S38 1990

Out in the World. Neil Miller. New York: Random House. 1992. HQ76.25M55 1992

Lesbian

The Original Coming Out Stories (expanded edition). Julia Penelope and Susan J. Wolfe, eds. Freedom: Crossing. 1989. HQ75.3C65 1989

Bisexual

Bi Any Other Name : Bisexual People Speak Out. Loraine Hutchins and Lani Kaahumanu, eds. Boston: Alyson. 1991 HQ74B5 1990

Transgender

Gender Outlaw : On Men, Women and the Rest of Us. Kate Bornstein. New York: Routlegde. 1994. HQ77.9B67 1992

Articles

"**Homosexual Identity Formation : A Theoretical Model.**" V Cass. Journal of Homosexuality 4:219-35

"**Developmental Stages in the Coming Out Process.**" E Coleman. Journal of Homosexuality 7:31-43

"**Individual Differences in the Coming Out Process for Gay Men**" G McDonald. Journal of Homosexuality 8:47-60

"**Becoming Homosexual : A Model of Gay Identity Acquisition**" R Troiden. Psychiatry 42:363-73

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Homosexuality: What Kinsey Really Said

by William H. DuBay (dubayw@delphi.com)

Forty years after sex researcher Alfred Kinsey told us that the world is not made up of two different kinds of people, gay and straight, we still read in the papers, "According to Kinsey, one out of ten (or one out of seven or five, depending on who is writing the piece) is homosexual." Such statements must have Kinsey spinning in his grave. Not only did he never make any such statements, he went out of his way to disclaim them.

The study that Kinsey and his colleagues published (Sexual Behavior in the Human Male in 1948 and Sexual Behavior in the Human Female in 1953) remains to date the largest and most significant study of human sexuality. Based on 16,000 in-depth personal interviews from the widest sampling of the general population, the Kinsey studies constitute most of what we know about homosexual behaviors. Kinsey was not the first or the last to observe that "homosexual" is a label society has invented to stigmatize and control the behavior. He repeatedly condemned the practice of labelling people homosexual:

"The classification of sexual behavior as masturbatory, heterosexual, or homosexual, is, therefore, unfortunate if it suggests that only different types of persons seek out or accept each kind of sexual activity. There is nothing known in the anatomy or physiology of sexual response and orgasm which distinguishes masturbatory, heterosexual, or homosexual reactions...(Kinsey et al. 1953:446) It would clarify our thinking if the terms could be dropped completely out of our vocabulary (Kinsey et al. 1948:617).

"Males do not represent two discrete populations, heterosexual and homosexual... Only the human mind invents categories and tries to force facts into pigeonholes. The living world is a continuum in each and every one of its aspects..(Kinsey et al. 1948:639).

"It is amazing to observe how many psychologists and psychiatrists have accepted this sort of propaganda, and have come to believe that homosexual males and females are discretely different from persons who respond to natural stimuli. Instead of using these terms as substantives which stand for persons, or even as adjectives to describe persons, they may better be used to describe the nature of the overt sexual relations, or of the stimuli to which an individual erotically responds (Kinsey et al. 1948:616-617).

"In regard to sexual behavior, it has been possible to maintain this dichotomy only by placing all persons who are exclusively heterosexual in a heterosexual category and all persons who have any amount of experience with their own sex, even including those with the slightest experience, in a homosexual category... The attempt to maintain a simple dichotomy on these matters exposes the traditional biases which are likely to enter whenever the heterosexual or homosexual classification of an individual is involved" (Kinsey et al. 1953:468-469)

While emphasizing the continuity of gradations between exclusively homosexual and exclusively heterosexual histories, Kinsey proposed his heterosexual-homosexual rating scale, based on both overt and psychological experiences (Kinsey et al. 1948:638-41):

0. Exclusively heterosexual with no homosexual
1. Predominantly heterosexual, only incidental homosexual
2. Predominantly heterosexual, but more than incidentally homosexual
3. Equally heterosexual and homosexual
4. Predominantly homosexual but more than incidentally heterosexual
5. Predominantly homosexual, but incidentally heterosexual
6. Exclusively homosexual.

Kinsey summarized his findings (Kinsey et al. 1948:650- 51) on the incidence of homosexual behavior among white males in the U.S. population in these words:

"37 per cent of the total male population has at least some overt homosexual experience to the point of orgasm between adolescence and old age. This accounts for nearly 2 males out of every 5 that one may meet.

"50 per cent of the males who remain single until age 35 have had overt homosexual experience to the point of orgasm, since the

onset of adolescence.

"58 per cent of the males who belong to the group that goes into high school but not beyond. 50 per cent of the grade school level, and 47 per cent of the college level have had homosexual experience to the point of orgasm if they remain single to the age of 35.

"63 per cent of all males never have overt homosexual experience to the point of orgasm after the onset of adolescence.

"50 per cent of all males (approximately) have neither overt nor psychic experience in the homosexual after the onset of adolescence.

"13 per cent of the males (approximately) react erotically to other males without having overt homosexual contacts after the onset of adolescence.

"30 per cent of all males have at least incidental homosexual experience or reactions (i.e., rate 1-6) over at least a three-year period between the ages of 16 and 55. This accounts for one male out of every three in the population who is past the early years of adolescence.

"25 per cent of the male population has more than incidental homosexual experience or reaction (i.e., rates 2-6) for at least three years between the ages of 16 and 55. In terms of averages, one male out of approximately every four has had or will have such distinct and continued homosexual experience.

"18 per cent of the males have at least as much of the homosexual as the heterosexual in their histories (i.e. rate 3-6) for at least three years between the ages of 16 and 55. This is more than one in six of the white male population.

"13 per cent of the population has more of the homosexual than the heterosexual (i.e., rates 4-6) for at least three years between the ages of 16 and 55. This is one in eight of the white male population.

"10 per cent of the males are more or less exclusively homosexual (i.e., rate 5 or 6) for at least three years between the ages of 16 and 55. This is one male in ten in the white population.

"8 per cent of the males are exclusively homosexual (i.e. rate a 6) for at least three years between the ages of 16 and 55. This is one male in every 13.

"4 per cent of the white males are exclusively homosexual throughout their lives, after the onset of adolescence."

The findings on homosexual behaviors of females are slightly lower but equally impressive.

Kinsey drew our attention to the common practice of labelling "heterosexual" only those who are exclusively homosexual, but labelling "homosexual" anyone who has had even minimal homosexual experience. "The persons who are identified as 'homosexuals' in much of the legal and social practice," he wrote, "have rated anything between 1 and 6 on the above scale" (Kinsey et al. 1948:651).

Investigators of Kinsey's Institute for Sex Research confirmed this important observation (Bell et al. 1981:9). They found that the sexual behaviors of 1000 gay-identified persons in the San Francisco area ranged from 2 to 5 on the Kinsey scale, a range so broad as to include a full third of the population of this country. Whatever gay- identified persons have in common with one another, it is clearly not their sexual behavior but their adoption of the homosexual role.

Kinsey felt that the high incidence of homosexual activity among males of high school education was of particular importance:

"These are the males who most often condemn the homosexual, most often ridicule and express disgust for such activity, and most often punish other males for their homosexuality. And yet, this is the group which has the largest amount of homosexual activity... As a group these males may strenuously deny that their sexual contacts have anything to do with homosexuality; but the full and complete record indicates that many of them have stronger psychic reactions to other males o admit. When they no longer find themselves being paid for such contacts, many of them begin paying other males for the privilege of sexual relations" (Kinsey et al. 1948:384).

Kinsey himself was surprised at the high incidence of homosexual behaviors in our society and continually challenged his own

data. He finally concluded:

"Over a period of several years we were repeatedly assailed with doubts as to whether we were getting a fair cross section of the total population or whether a selection of cases was biasing the results. It has been our experience, however, that each new group into which we have gone has provided substantially the same data. Whether the histories were taken in one large city or another, whether they were taken in large cities or small towns, or in rural areas, whether they came from one college or from another, a church school or a state university or some private institution, whether they came from one part of the country or from another, the incidence data on the homosexual have been ore or less the same.

"While the validity of the data on all of the sexual outlets has been tested and retested throughout the study, especial attention has been given to testing the material on the homosexual" (Kinsey et al. 1948:625).

As to the origins of homosexual behaviors, Kinsey, like Freud, felt that all persons are born bisexual and one's sexual activities and pleasures depend on a wide variety of causes. Countless studies convinced him that any strong emotion can trigger sexual arousal. He wrote,

"The picture is that of the psychosexual emerging from a much more generalized and basic physiologic capacity which becomes sexual as the adult knows it, through experience and conditioning (Kinsey et al. 1953:165).

"Considering the physiology of sexual response and the mammalian backgrounds of human behavior, it is not so difficult to explain why a human animal does a particular thing sexually. It is more difficult to explain why each and every individual is not in every type of sexual activity...(Kinsey et al. 1953:451)

"I think that much of human sexual behavior is no more complicated than a person's likes or dislikes for particular foods, books, amusements, or anything else. Through it all, association is a very important factor. This means that what a person happens to do one time is avoided or repeated another time, depending upon the pleasure derived from the first experience (in Pomeroy, 1972:324).

"This problem, is after all, part of the broader problem of choices in general: the choice of the road that one takes, of the clothes that one wears, of the food that one eats, of the place in which one sleeps, and of the endless other things that one is constantly choosing. A choice of a partner in a sexual relation becomes more significant only because society demands that there be a particular choice in this matter, and does not so often dictate one's choice of food or of clothing" (Kinsey et al. 1948:661).

In a 1983 review of 228 major studies on sexual orientation published in 48 different journals, Psychologist John DeCecco and his colleagues at San Francisco State University found that the investigators were unable to define the term, much less come up with any evidence for its existence (Shively et al. 1983/84). This paper and others reinforced Kinsey's position that what makes an act homosexual is the object of the desire and not the subject. As Kinsey insisted, "If the term homosexual is restricted as it should be, the homosexuality or heterosexuality of any activity becomes apparent by determining the sexes of the two individuals in the relationship (Kinsey et al. 1948:615)."

In short, Kinsey gave us a picture of human sexuality quite different than the rigid categories of gay and straight propagated in the media. Instead, he gave us a picture of an astounding variety in human sexual experience, a variety, he insisted, that is quite unlike anything else in nature, a variety that physiological differences alone cannot explain.

Kinsey concluded his chapter on homosexuality in the "Male" volume with this paragraph:

"If all persons with any trace of homosexual history, or those who were predominantly homosexual, were eliminated from the population today, there is no reason for believing that the incidence of the homosexual in the next generation would be materially reduced. The homosexual has been a significant part of human sexual activity since the dawn of history, primarily because it is an expression of capacities that are basic in the human animal" (Kinsey et al. 1948:666).

William H. DuBay is a writer living in Costa Mesa, California. His books include Gay Identity: The Self Under Ban, McFarland, 1987.

Bibliography

Bell, A.P., Weinberg, M.S., and Hammersmith, S.K. **Sexual Preference: Its Development in Men and Women**. Bloomington,

More Similarities than Differences: Dispelling the Myths of Homosexuality

Myth #1: Lesbians and Gay men are always easy to identify

People often use lesbian and gay stereotypes to identify a person's sexual orientation, such as gay men are effeminate and lesbians are butch.

A study conducted to see if people could accurately identify a person's sexual orientation after watching a series of video taped interviews. **Close to 80% of the subjects were unable to identify the person's sexual orientation** (Berger et al, 1987).

Some studies have found that lesbians do rate higher on masculinity scores, which comes largely from their high self-rating as independent. The measures of masculinity and femininity tend to be gender-biased and are not very useful in the study of gay men and lesbians (Finley & Scheltema, 1991).

The homosexual community is very diverse and its members can not be neatly categorized into stereotypes based on myths and appearance. Only when we dispel these stereotypes, that continue to fuel people's homophobic attitudes, will people realize that there are more similarities than differences between the gay and straight population.

Myth #2: All Lesbians are either butch or femme.

Some gay women are, but many believe they do not have to adopt such restrictive roles in order to express their love of women. This does not mean we should pass judgement on those women who are in butch-femme relationships and who are happy with their roles.

The butch-femme myth stems from the visibility of the butch lesbian. The butch lesbian also reinforces the myth that lesbians can not get a man and the butch- femme relationship is acting out the man-woman relationship which is what all women really want.

Lesbianism is NOT a dislike of men. **Lesbianism is an inclination, a positive emotional, physical attraction to other women.**

Lesbianism (& homosexuality) is not just a sexual activity – it is something that spans beyond a person's physical behaviour.

Myth #3: Women become lesbians because they have had bad or negative sexual experiences with men.

A 1990 study of lesbian and female students found that there was no significant difference in their traumatic heterosexual experiences. Both lesbians and heterosexual women reported the same number of traumatic experiences (incest, molestation, rape, physical abuse) (Brannock & Chapman, 1990). Most women said they began to question their sexual orientation because they felt strong emotional and/or sexual bonds with women and NOT because they felt an aversion towards men.

Myth #4: Openly gay teachers, professors, professionals and other role models are dangerous because they will try to recruit people to homosexuality.

Opponents of openly gay teachers and other role models argue that students may wish to be like their teachers and/or professors given their position of authority and prestige. An openly gay teacher or professor can, however, provide a positive role model for those students in the minority, who are gay or know they are going to be gay and who desperately need support and understanding.

Openly gay men or lesbians in positions of authority, such as in education, politics, religious institutions, the medical profession, etc. help to dispel the myth of homosexuals as socially maladjusted and unstable.

It is highly unlikely that one role model could override all the messages that reinforce heterosexuality in society.